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# THESIS

**DETAILING OF MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND CIVIL SERVICE MARINERS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AFLOAT PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT CENTER**

by

Colleen A. Matthews

March, 1996

Thesis Advisor: Dan C. Boger

THESIS
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The pending consolidation of personnel operations now performed at each Area Command under an Afloat Personnel Management (APM) Center will have a significant impact on the detailing function and on the quality of customer service received by civilian mariners. This study considers the impact of the APM Center on the detailing process and the level of customer service delivered. Conclusions and recommendations are presented.

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# DETAILING OF MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND CIVIL SERVICE MARINERS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AFLOAT PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT CENTER

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Lieutenant , United States Navy
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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN MANAGEMENT**

from the

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is a management study which describes and analyzes the processes implemented by the Military Sealift Command's Atlantic and Pacific Area Commands in the detailing of civil service marine personnel to Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force (NFAF) and selected Special Mission ships. Detailing is a complex process in which a personnel specialist assigns a mariner to a given ship while at the same time ensuring that he has completed the requisite training and possesses the appropriate United States Coast Guard license or documents. Because of the enormous impact it has on mariners' working lives, this thesis also examines mariners' perceptions of the detailing service they presently receive.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. BACKGROUND

### 1. The Military Sealift Command (MSC) Today

The Military Sealift Command (MSC) is the Navy command responsible for all ocean transportation for the Department of Defense (DOD). MSC oversees a fleet of more than 130 ships which provide sealift services for DOD, combat logistics support for Navy ships at sea and special mission support for undersea technology.

Of particular importance to this thesis is MSC's Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force (NFAF) which provides direct support to U.S. Navy combatant ships worldwide. This support includes the delivery of ammunition, fuel, food, and other supplies. NFAF ships also provide towing, salvage and surveillance services. Among the 30 vessels presently deployed in the NFAF program are fleet oilers, ocean tugs, ammunition ships and dry stores ships. These ships are crewed by approximately 3,400 civil service mariners nearly evenly distributed between the east and west coast areas of operation. Most of the NFAF ships also have a small U.S. Navy detachment on board to provide communications, ordnance handling, helicopter operations and technical support.

NFAF ships support the Navy fleet in routine and emergency operations all over the world. In 1994, NFAF ships provided underway replenishment services, spare parts, food and other stores to numerous Navy combatants involved in Persian Gulf, Caribbean and U.N. and NATO operations in the Adriatic. [Ref. 1: p. 23]

In the past decade the Navy has experienced a drawdown of forces and a reduction in the number of ships in the fleet. The mid-1980's goal of a 600-ship Navy was never attained. There are now fewer than 450 ships in the active fleet. One of the ways in which the Navy was able to reduce the number of active duty personnel and the number of ships it operated was to convert some of its Combat Logistics Force vessels, particularly the dry stores ships, to operation by MSC. After decommissioning from the Navy, and a conversion period in a shipyard, the ship is recommissioned as a United States Naval Ship (USNS) gray hull whose stack bears the yellow, blue and black stripes of a MSC vessel. Operating with less than one third of the manning required during her active Navy service, USNS ships are able to perform the fleet replenishment tasking at a significantly lower cost. The Navy is able to have more of its personnel serve in combat duties on ships which can remain on station for longer periods of time. Civilian mariner personnel thus play an integral role in enabling the Navy to fulfill its combat mission with constrained assets. It should also be noted that some NFAF ships, specifically the oilers and ocean tugs, were constructed for direct operation by MSC.

The Military Sealift Command is a Defense Business Operations Fund activity. As such, it does not receive an annual budgetary appropriation. To replenish its fund of working capital, MSC must charge fees to cover the costs of services it provides to DOD customers. In recent years, as the Navy and other DOD clients have experienced reductions in their appropriated funding, MSC has been hearing a recurring call for the command to provide its

services at a lower cost. In line with the growing influence of the Total Quality Leadership management philosophy, customers also expressed the desire for closer and more effective avenues of communication with MSC so that the command could respond more rapidly to their needs.

### 2. Reinvention of MSC

Soon after he assumed command of MSC in the summer of 1994, Vice Admiral Philip M. Quast initiated a comprehensive restructuring effort to improve communication within the organization, to increase accountability for key mission areas, and to more effectively serve customers. Senior leaders, with the help of management consultants, began to consider ideas for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization's worldwide operations.

At the outset of the reinvention initiative, nine working groups were convened to focus on the major functions performed by the command. More than 120 employees participated in the teams. The working groups were to be guided in the development of their ideas by several of the principles in MSC's vision statement for the future. In line with the command's new vision, the working groups aimed to provide uniformly high customer service, streamline and eliminate duplication, clarify and align accountability, responsibility and authority, and take care of the command's people. [Ref. 2: p. 2] It soon became clear to MSC's leaders that adoption of a program management structure would enable the command to achieve these goals.

One of the nine reinvention working groups (the Afloat Personnel Management or APM working group) was given the task of developing more effective ways of providing personnel support to MSC's civil service mariners. This working group was comprised of port captains from the two area commands and other key union and civilian representatives who attempted to ensure that civilian mariner concerns were taken into account while the working group generated new ideas.

Admiral Quast conducted a number of briefings with a cross section of civilian mariners to communicate information on the status of the reinvention project and the role it would play in helping the command to achieve the goal of being more responsive to its DOD customers. Various surveys were also distributed to solicit the mariners' own ideas for improving operations and their particular concerns about the changes to come. Admiral Quast realized the importance of involving people at all levels of the organization in the reinvention process -- in this way they would feel a sense of ownership of the new program management structure and more readily adapt to the new way of doing business.

### 3. Current Organizational Structure

MSC is part of the Navy Operating Forces and has a dual chain of command structure which duplicates that of other operational Navy organizations. There is an operational chain of command that reports to, receives taskings from and supports the missions of the numbered Fleet Commanders. Via the administrative chain of command, MSC's flag level Navy commanding officer, designated as COMSC, reports to the Chief of Naval Operations

(CNO) and manages the forces and personnel necessary to perform tasking from the operational fleet commanders. [Ref. 3: p. 1.7]

The mission of MSC's administrative organization is to develop and maintain fleet readiness. Success here is determined by personnel readiness, material readiness and training readiness. Personnel readiness ensures that minimum total manning requirements are in place and that workers are provided skills necessary to accomplish operations and maintenance. Material readiness encompasses the maintenance, logistic and supply support needed for effective operations. Training readiness and a high level of proficiency can be achieved through completion of operational exercises. [Ref. 3: p. 1.8]

MSC was able to structure the administrative organization as necessary to meet the above requirements. Headquarters were established in Washington, D.C. Two Area Commands were located in the continental United States: MSC Atlantic (COMSCLANT) in Bayonne, New Jersey and MSC Pacific (COMSCPAC) in Oakland, California. In addition there are two other Area Commands, various Subarea Commands, Squadrons, and Field Offices in other parts of the world.

One of the major responsibilities of the Atlantic and Pacific Area Commands is to operate and administer Naval Fleet Auxiliary and Special Mission ships. For this reason each of the Area Commands has a Personnel Directorate which is responsible for hiring and providing highly qualified mariners to sail the ships which operate in each of their fleets.

The command's Headquarters provides overall guidance and develops policy for the entire organization. The Area Commanders, which assist COMSC in the achievement of missions and responsibilities, execute the policies which originate at the headquarters. In addition to the personnel functions which reside at MSCPAC and MSCLANT, there is a Personnel Directorate, referred to as COMSC N1, which advises and develops personnel policy for all of MSC. Some other key tasks performed by the headquarters Personnel Directorate are negotiations with licensed and unlicensed unions, classifications of positions, development of training requirements, establishment of manning scales, and employee relations and management disciplinary cases. There are approximately 50 employees on the headquarters N1 staff. The Personnel Directorates at the MSCLANT and MSCPAC Area Commands are comprised of branches which perform similar functions. Each has a branch which performs Shore Staffing, Employee Relations, Training, and Marine Employment/Crewing. Within the Marine Employment and Crewing Branch are the Recruitment, Promotion, and Detailing functions. These three functions are closely coordinated to accomplish crewing of ships. MSCLANT has approximately 70 employees in its Personnel Directorate; MSCPAC has 46. Both the Atlantic and Pacific Area Commands are tenant activities on bases selected for closure by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC). Those bases are expected to be closed by 1998.

### 4. Consolidation of Personnel Functions

In May 1995 Admiral Quast accepted the recommendation of the COMSC Re-engineering Group that economies and efficiencies could be realized through the establishment of an Afloat Personnel Management (APM) Center. [Ref. 4] Under the APM Center concept there would be a consolidation of the two Area Command Personnel Directorates that handle all civil service marine personnel and administrative needs. The consolidation would enable MSC to streamline its personnel processes, eliminate duplication and bring the service providers closer to their customers. In the long term it is expected that a consolidated APM Center will generate cost reductions in the shoreside personnel processing and planning infrastructure while maintaining a high level of service to the mariners.

One of the issues the Afloat Personnel Management working group (which proposed the APM Center concept) was tasked to consider is the location and operation of the detailing function. Detailing is defined as the process and act of selecting a civilian mariner for a given assignment onboard a ship and performance of the administrative functions associated with that assignment. [Ref. 5] Detailing is presently performed by personnel specialists at the area commands situated on each coast. MSC maintains two separate pools of mariners who sail in either the Atlantic or Pacific fleet. This circumstance is due in large part to maritime industry traditions and geographic considerations. Each employee made a conscious decision at the beginning of the hiring process to choose the coast that would best

serve his needs. There are separate unions which represent the civil service mariners on each coast. Also, there are very strong feelings among the mariners that they want separate fleet pools maintained.

## B. OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH

Detailing has an enormous impact on the mariner's working life. It is a complex process in which a personnel specialist assigns a mariner to a given ship while at the same time ensuring that he has completed the requisite training and possesses the Coast Guard license or documents required for specific positions. Detailing is an extremely important function which involves a large part of the personnel resources of each of the area commands.

With the pending consolidation of the personnel operations now performed at each area command, it is instructive to examine how the detailing function is currently operationalized at each Area Command Personnel Office. This thesis will consider the detailing operation from a management perspective. The thesis will then examine the perceptions of mariners regarding the detailing service they currently receive -- the mariners' level of satisfaction, the problems they encounter, and recommendations for improvement. Finally, this study will examine whether the APM Center, by consolidating personnel functions, will create special difficulties in the detailing process. Recommendations concerning any changes or additions to the new APM Center structure will be made if warranted.

## C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The overarching goal of this thesis is to evaluate COMSCLANT's and COMSCPAC's present civilian marine personnel detailing system. The study considers the implementation of the detailing processes with a view toward assessing how policies are put into effect and eventually received by the civil service mariner as a customer.

Information has been collected through contact with and interviews of MSC personnel. Numerous civilian mariners were interviewed during a two week period the researcher spent onboard a fleet oiler in Norfolk, Virginia. A tour and interviews were also conducted with personnel onboard a dry stores ship in the same port. The researcher was also able to interview several mariners who sail on MSCPAC ships. Interviews and discussions were held with placement officers and personnel managers at the area commands in Oakland, CA and Bayonne, NJ. In-house and published documents provided additional information to document the operation of the detailing system.

## D. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The scope of this study was limited by the time available on the part of the researcher to conduct interviews with the civilian mariners as well as that available to work with and observe the placement officers while they demonstrated the detailing processes. Broad generalizations had to be drawn from the opinion data provided by random interviews with civilian mariners who contributed their time to furthering this project's value. The fact that

MSCPAC ships are forward-deployed and infrequently in port in Oakland limited the number of mariners in this fleet who were available for interviews.

## E. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

Chapter II describes and analyzes the processes implemented by the Atlantic and Pacific Area Commands in the detailing of civil service marine personnel to NFAF and selected Special Mission ships. Chapter III examines the civilian mariner perceptions of the detailing system. Chapter IV discusses detailing under a consolidated Afloat Personnel Management Center and the anticipated impact on the quality of personnel services delivered. And, finally, Chapter V presents conclusions and recommendations.

# II. DETAILING OF CIVIL SERVICE MARINERS

## A. BACKGROUND

### 1. Need for Civil Service Mariner Workforce

MSC has in its employ a group of civilian mariners who serve onboard the NFAF and a few of the Special Mission ships. It is necessary for these mariners to be government employees because they serve with and support the Navy (and other DOD clients) in routine and difficult situations all over the world. While they are not combatants, the civilian mariners must function under the command and control of the Navy and perform their mission with unfailing reliability and skill. Civil service mariners, who perform underway replenishment of Navy ships under often-arduous conditions, are held to a higher standard and must accomplish more challenging tasks than their counterparts in the commercial maritime industry. MSC's mariners receive extensive training in damage control and firefighting because their ships are required to survive casualties and remain ready to resupply the Navy. Because of the potential dangers they face and the scope of duties they have to perform in a military environment, MSC has to retain and nurture the civil service marine workforce.

### 2. Excepted Service

The Code of Federal Regulations allows MSC to except all positions on vessels the command operates from the requirements of the Competitive Service. [Ref. 6: p. 330.2] This is because sea-going employees perform out-of-the-ordinary government work. The Civilian

Marine Personnel Instruction (CMPI) [Ref. 6], is the codification of the special set of hiring standards MSC implemented to govern hiring, employment, training and termination of civil service mariners.

In the Competitive Service, entry level employees are required to complete a basic clerical test. Candidates are ranked by their scores and placed on a register for potential hire. Those persons with the highest test scores would be selected first. For higher level General Schedule (GS) positions, an applicant must provide positive documentation of requisite education or appropriate work experience.

Civil service mariner positions are designated as excepted service because an individual brings to the job specialized education, skills, experience, and most importantly, a license or endorsed documents from the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). The Coast Guard thus certifies that the bearer of the license or endorsed document is able to perform various shipboard and boat handling duties. The nature of the mariner's excepted service position dictates that he spend the vast percentage of his working life at sea and that he not serve in a competitive service position ashore unless he resigns from his present position.

MSC has obtained a waiver from the federal Office of Personnel Management which allows it to retain control of all aspects of civilian marine personnel management. This function is considered sufficiently unique and in need of enough specialized expertise (there are 142 categories of pay for mariners) that MSC was not required to bring civilian mariner management under the regionalized federal personnel system. [Ref. 7]

### 3. Rank Structure

Similar to the Navy, civilian mariners can be segregated into two corps which bring different levels of education and training to their position. The licensed corps are the officers who are appointed to positions such as master (i.e., captain), first officer (also referred to as chief mate), chief engineer, first assistant engineer, etc. Officers are usually college graduates; a large number of the deck officers attended one of the maritime academies. Pursers and Medical Service Officers are required to have a USCG certificate of registry. There is an intermediate rank of mariners who are similar to senior enlisted personnel in the Navy; examples of the positions they hold are ship's boatswain, yeoman storekeeper, cook and reefer engineer. These individuals work their way up through the ranks through initiative, hard work and on-the-job training, as well as a broad range of training opportunities made available through MSC's training department, or they possess these skills when hired from the Navy or commercial industry. The entry level and equivalents of junior enlisted personnel are the unlicensed sailors. They usually possess high-school-level education and fill billets such as wiper in the engineering department, ordinary seaman in deck, and steward utility in the supply department. Unlicensed personnel must possess documents endorsed by the USCG.

There are opportunities for unlicensed personnel to work their way up the ranks and attain officer positions. This is known among the mariners as the "hawsepipe" promotion route. In the past MSC placed most of its officer recruitment emphasis on obtaining graduates of the nation's four maritime academies and the U.S. Naval Academy. In recent

years, as a result of dissatisfaction over a lack of promotion opportunities for experienced mariners who had been with the command for a long time, the hiring policy was changed. All new recruits being hired into any position must start in unlicensed positions. At the present time there are maritime academy graduates serving in unlicensed engine and able seaman billets while working toward promotion to an officer position as is the practice in the commercial industry. This practice allows the new graduate time to get hands-on experience in an operational environment that provides a career path to licensed positions. [Ref. 8] It is also true that there are not enough officer billets currently available for the number of mariners who have the USCG licenses, endorsements, training and experience to fill them.

## B. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF DETAILING

### 1. Importance of Crewing

The primary mission of the Marine Employment and Crewing Branch, which is responsible for the detailing function, is to ensure that MSC ships are fully manned and are able to go to sea. This is not an insignificant responsibility. MSC ships sail with fewer than one-third the number of crew members assigned to a Navy vessel performing the fleet replenishment mission with active duty sailors. As merchant mariner vessels, MSC ships have to meet minimum manning criteria for key positions that are established by the Coast Guard. If key positions are not filled the ship simply cannot put out to sea. Approximately 75 percent of the manning scale on a typical MSC ship constitute key positions. The absence of a

master, chief mate, or enough persons to provide crew meals could delay a ship's sailing orders. [Ref. 8]

The placement or detailing function is performed by placement officers (the term detailers is used interchangeably) who work in the crewing department at each area command personnel office. The Atlantic and Pacific Area Commands each have administrative responsibility for a complement of ships. There are currently 3,400 civil service mariners allocated between the two coasts to sail aboard those ships. As occurs in the Navy, personnel are assigned to a tour of duty for a specified period of time. Planning ensures that a qualified person will be available when a vacancy is anticipated. The detailing function therefore encompasses the planning for training, allowance of time for people to enjoy earned leave, and assignment of an individual to a billet among a ship's crew.

It should be noted that MSC abides by a policy, which originated at the headquarters Personnel Office, of working with a 125% personnel pipeline. This means that the command has 25% more afloat personnel than the number needed to fill its total shipboard positions. The excess mariners provide a pool to ensure that all shipboard positions are filled at all times while allowing for activities such as leave, training, travel, discipline, sickness, etc. On any given day the vast majority of mariners are engaged in one or more of these activities while away from their ship.

### 2. Detailing by Shipboard Department

The detailing function affects a new employee even before he reports onboard the command. Placement officers periodically evaluate the pool of available mariners against the billet requirements and initiate the hiring process when a balance no longer exists.

After a prospective employee completes the pre-employment screening process and is hired, he is immediately transferred to the Placement and Receiving Branch. Depending on the specific shipboard department in which the mariner will be working, he is assigned to one of three placement sections. There is a senior placement officer for the deck, engineering and supply departments. It should be noted that officer detailing is handled differently from that of the unlicensed personnel. Each area command has a Port Captain and Chief Engineer who provides an interface between shoreside operational planners and the afloat personnel. One of the duties of these officers is to oversee career management of the officers in the deck and engineering specialties. While the assignment remains the responsibility of the detailer, the Port Captain and the Chief Engineer exert considerable influence in the placement of officers on the various ships.

After reporting to his placement officer, a new hire has an opportunity to make the acquaintance of the individual(s) who will serve as his principal link to the shore side of the command. At any time that a mariner is not attached to a ship, he is supervised by his placement officer and must maintain a reporting relationship to that individual. The placement officer will assess the new hire's qualifications and determine an appropriate ship for him.

Although the new hire may have been given a command orientation, the placement officer is responsible for providing information to the new employee regarding the broad outlines of his duties, the ship type and mission, her officers, the steps for processing travel claims, details on leave entitlement and request procedures, disciplinary regulations, training opportunities, promotion system, etc. She will also ensure that the mariner has travel documents and airline tickets that will enable him to report to his ship which, more often than not, is in a foreign port. The processor explains the paperwork which must be completed and periodically updated to effectuate health insurance coverage, retirement programs, and benefits for relatives.

After a mariner has been sailing on his ship for a period of time he is entitled to take leave. In general, policy allows a mariner to take leave after six consecutive months onboard a ship. A leave request must be submitted 60 days prior to the leave date desired. The request is routed through and approved by the mariner's shipboard chain of command. An electronic mail message containing the leave request is then sent from the ship to the mariner's placement officer. A confirmation letter is sent back to the mariner which tells him when he should report to the area command after completion of his leave. The detailer then begins the process of evaluating personnel who may be or will soon be completing leave, finishing a training opportunity, returning from sick leave, or already awaiting an assignment. Both Area Command personnel offices are sensitive to the need to accommodate mariners' leave requests. There has been a long history of dissatisfaction on the part of mariners about the

issue of being able to take leave at the time they desire. Placement officers track overdue relief requests and vacancies (if these should arise) and report this information to the highest levels of command leadership.

### 3. Detailer Duties

The key point to be emphasized is that mariners accomplish the greatest part of their business dealings and contact with the shore personnel office through the placement officer. After a mariner's relief reports to the ship and turnover is completed, the mariner goes to his leave address. The ship's purser (i.e., a personnel officer who is generally assigned to larger ships) sends a message to the placement officer informing her of the last pay included (LPI) date on the ship for the mariner. The day following the LPI date, the detailer places the mariner in her payroll database -- she has now assumed responsibility for management of the mariner until he again reports to a ship. The detailer then places the mariner's name in a queue which is periodically reviewed to find and match the mariner to a new assignment as soon as possible. His training record is reviewed to determine if mandatory training is due (e.g., firefighting, small arms, shipboard safety). The medical record is also screened so that a fit for duty (FFD) physical is completed when the mariner reports to the Placement Branch upon completion of leave.

When a leave request is submitted, 30 days leave is automatically approved. The mariner is given a date (30 days later) to report to his placement officer at the area command. Detailers have the authority to grant extensions of leave if they believe the person is not

immediately needed to fill a billet. After the mariner's leave is completed and he reports to his placement officer, they engage in a discussion about the specific ship or type of ship the mariner wishes to serve aboard. Because placement officers are also responsible for career management for the unlicensed mariners, there is a discussion of training opportunities the mariner would like to have to enhance his job performance and improve his chances for promotion. The placement officer also coordinates the mariner's visit to the medical department where his record and physical examination is made current.

As stated previously, a mariner is assigned by his placement officer to a job in one of three major shipboard departments. It is desirable for a mariner to remain in the employ of MSC for many years because the command reaps the benefits of the training provided and gains stable, predictable work performance from experienced personnel who are thoroughly familiar with operations. It appears to be the case that a MSCLANT mariner will remain in the department to which he is initially assigned for an extended period of time, if not the duration of his career. (This is not to say that people are not desirous of transferring among departments. Some people in fact do so, but there is great variability in the time it takes to complete a move and no guarantee that one will succeed at such an endeavor.) There is greater vertical and lateral movement of mariners in MSCPAC; they are more likely to obtain an interdepartmental transfer. [Ref. 8]

### 4. Detailer Career Track

Placement officers do not appear to have a readily identifiable accession and advancement path. There are thirteen personnel staffing specialists who now serve as placement officers and assistant placement officers at the two area commands. While an in-depth study of their prior job experiences was not obtained from each of these individuals, it appears that the majority have been with MSC for a considerable number of years -- some have been with the organization for more than 20 years. Most placement officers began their career in the crewing department by processing the vast amount of paperwork associated with employment of civil service mariners.

In their early days with MSC the individuals who are now placement officers started in clerical positions in which they processed employment documents, pay records, benefits, licenses, retirement plans, promotions, pay changes, disciplinary actions, benefits for relatives, and assorted other documents. The volume of paperwork is exacerbated by the frequency with which mariners move into different pay categories: pay changes when mariners earn overtime (at numerous different rates), when they are in a training or leave status, or when they go to a ship with a lower base salary. Both area commands acknowledge that it takes many years to train people to perform the jobs which support the mariners. By the time a person has been promoted to a senior placement officer position, she (there is at present only one male out of a total of thirteen placement officers) has acquired extensive knowledge of personnel actions. There are senior placement officers, at a grade of GS-11 or GS-12,

assigned to each of the three major departments. There is also an assistant (GS-7/9) who is trained by the senior placement officer and who is assisted by her in making difficult decisions.

### 5. Long Term Relationships

The three senior placement officers at each area command are responsible for assignment of mariners who work in either the deck, engineering, or supply departments. Most detailers have had several years experience working with the mariners in a department by the time they are promoted to the senior position. They often continue to work within a given department for several more years. The result is that placement officers have a long period of time in which to get to know the mariners. The detailers call upon an extensive knowledge of shipboard organization, position requirements such as specialized training, license/endorsements, or previous experience in order to match the best qualified mariner to each billet.

Both mariners and detailers acknowledge that personal relationships are established between the two over a period of time. The mariner interfaces with the detailer to request and plan for assignments and specific training he desires. The placement officer learns the mariner's likes and dislikes as well as his career ambitions through conversations with him about his intention to upgrade his Coast Guard license or to complete command-sponsored training courses. Because placement officers are responsible for ensuring that each mariner receives a timely evaluation, she is the repository of a great deal of information about the mariner's job performance. In the event the mariner is involved in a disciplinary problem

aboard the ship, the detailer is immediately informed. This is so because she would have to arrange for the mariner's repatriation to the area command if the incident is serious enough. The detailer also maintains close oversight of the mariner's status as he negotiates the disciplinary process. She must keep him gainfully employed if he will be ashore for an extended period of time, resolve his pay situation, and serve as an informal counselor if he desires her to do so.

Placement officers are voting members of mariner promotion boards. This is additional acknowledgement that, after years of being cognizant of a mariner's performance on and off a ship, she has acquired a solid knowledge of his capabilities. The detailers are sensitive to and try to accommodate a mariner's wishes to serve on board a particular ship or with certain officers. They believe that if they can satisfy the mariner's request (if timing and available vacancies permit it), the mariner will be happy and will be likely to work well for a longer period of time on a ship. Mariners can remain on a ship for a year or more if they so choose -- the command realizes a savings in reduced transportation expense if mariners choose not to rotate every six months.

The detailer also tries to not assign a mariner to a ship if he admits he doesn't have a good relationship with the vessel's key officer(s) (i.e., master, chief mate or chief engineer). If a mariner has had a disciplinary incident while on board a ship and is removed, the placement officer will not send him there again as long as the same key officer(s) continues to serve aboard that ship. It is also the case that detailers will be contacted by a ship's senior

officers about the performance of a mariner. Although a ship's leadership must have a documented reason if they do not wish to accept the prospective assignment of a mariner, the detailer cannot completely discount complaints which she may hear from these sources, especially if a pattern appears to surround a particular mariner.

The vast majority of mariners never have any dealings with the disciplinary offices at their respective area commands. This being the case, most mariners make contact with the Personnel Offices only in the process of transferring from one ship to another upon completion of their leave. The great majority of their shoreside requirements are processed through or under the direction of their placement officer. Both parties expect to have a good deal of contact with each other. Most mariners understand that the placement officer plays a significant role in their work life. Both parties also realize that each of their jobs can be performed more successfully if there is good communication and mutual understanding of each others' objectives.

A placement officer also serves as the liaison between the mariner and his family in times of trouble. She may have to help a spouse to contact a mariner in a foreign port in times of emergency. There are times when she may have to counsel surviving family members about benefits which may be available to them. Some detailers say that in the event of a serious illness it is not unusual for them to spend many hours consoling a spouse or a mother and even in helping them negotiate payment to hospitals or in the most unfortunate cases, arranging for a funeral. [Ref. 9]

## C. DETAILING AT THE PACIFIC AREA COMMAND

The purpose of this section is to explain in greater detail how mariners are detailed to those ships under the administrative control of the Pacific Area Command. Detailing encompasses the process of selecting a mariner for an assignment and the performance of administrative functions associated with that assignment. Some examples of the administrative functions conjoined with detailing are scheduling of physical exams and approved training, preparation of travel orders and record keeping. [Ref. 5]

As of February 1996 MSCPAC had eight oilers, four dry stores supply ships, four tugs, three special mission ships, one ammunition and one hospital ship in its fleet. These numbers periodically expand or contract as the command's mission is impacted by changes in DOD sponsor requirements. Approximately 1,800 civilian marine personnel are available to crew the MSCPAC vessels.

The Pacific fleet ships operate in a markedly different manner from those on the Atlantic Coast. MSCPAC ships are forward-deployed to many locations all over the vast Pacific Ocean. These ships very seldom return to homeport in Oakland, and spend the majority of their time away from the continental United States (CONUS). MSCPAC mariners are also characterized by their penchant for living in widely dispersed locations; most do not have a home which is close to the homeport. A substantial percentage of these sailors live in foreign countries near the Asian continent. There are a high number of retired military (mostly former Navy), a significant number of people who originated from the Philippines,

and many who have made a home on those islands. As with the mariners of the Atlantic fleet, MSCPAC sailors made a conscious choice of the fleet they desired to sail and would be reluctant to relocate to the other coast.

It is often said that the retention rate is much lower and turnover much higher among MSCPAC mariners than among those who sail for MSCLANT. The explanation is that mariners are less willing to work for the long term in a forward-deployed fleet where they must spend extended periods of time away from their families. For those mariners who choose to remain with the company for the long haul, there are more favorable promotion opportunities in MSCPAC than can be obtained in the Atlantic fleet.

The Civilian Personnel Officer (CPO), code N1, is responsible for detailing and personnel administration for all civilian marine employees. The CPO is able to delegate authority for coordination and execution of these responsibilities to managers in subsidiary offices. [Ref. 5] This thesis will consider the functions performed by the Marine Placement Branch (also referred to as the Crewing Branch) in enabling the CPO/N1 to detail mariners to the command's ships.

The first floor of Building 310 at the Naval Supply Center in Oakland, California is the primary location of the personnel specialists and support staff which manage mariner assignment and administration. There are four placement officers who are responsible for detailing deck, engineering, supply and medical/miscellaneous personnel. Each placement

officer works with an assistant and a processor in a specialized unit which handles an array of functions to complete the detailing process.

At MSCPAC a mariner reports to Building 310 at the start of the work day following completion of his leave period. Building 310 is a five story structure which houses the entire MSCPAC area command operations. The commodore has an office on the fifth floor. Most of the first floor is occupied by employees of the Personnel Department (N1), the Payroll and Disbursing sections, and some warehouse space. There is a lounge for the mariners, the medical department, and the mariner pool coordinator's office all within close proximity of the detailer's offices.

The mariner first reports to the pool coordinator who conducts a brief interview to determine the mariner's requirements for the next several days. Before the mariner reports to his placement officer, the pool coordinator will have ensured that the medical exam is initiated and that the training division has screened the record to ascertain that required training has been completed or scheduled. He will also refer the mariner for a security screening and check that there are no pending disciplinary actions. Arrangements are also made by the pool coordinator to house the mariner at a contracted hotel and to begin payment of a subsistence allowance.

The mariner then reports to his detailer to discuss his preference for his next shipboard assignment. Each mariner is motivated by a wide array of reasons for requesting a specific ship. The variety of ships operated by MSCPAC was specified earlier. It is the case that the

living conditions, type of work, amount of base pay, and prospect of earning overtime pay is different among most of the ship types. A mariner may be guided by one factor more so than another. However, because different benefits and costs accrue from serving on each ship type (and even among ships of the same type), it is extremely important that the placement officer exercise care in making an assignment.

All other things being equal (i.e., two people with the same qualifications are vying for a position on a given ship), time can be the single most important factor in a detailer's placement decision. After a mariner reports to Building 310 to complete medical screening and required training and to wait for his next assignment, he is placed in a "duty status" pay category which is a lower base pay than he would earn onboard a ship. Mariners can lose (i.e., fail to earn) a significant sum of money (i.e., overtime pay) if they have to wait in the pool for an extended period of time. For this reason, and to maintain fairness to all mariners, it is extremely important that placement officers maintain impeccable records of the date that a mariner reports to Building 310 and starts the clock running on his waiting period. Detailers are required to maintain placement lists based on dates mariners report for duty in the Placement Branch or enter elected leave-without-pay status awaiting assignment. The placement lists must be updated daily and be made available for review by mariners if requested.

The placement officer will consult one of a number of sources to find the next vacancy. An assignment may have to be made to fill a leave request, in response to a mariner

on a ship being found not fit for duty, or in response to a phone call from a ship's officers indicating that a vacancy is forthcoming. Other MSCPAC departments may bring information to her attention, or new construction plans may create assignment possibilities. [Ref. 10]

A striking feature of the MSCLANT placement process is the degree of randomness which characterizes the number of mariners who will be available and waiting for an assignment at any given time. Although mariners are required to serve on board a ship for a minimum of six months before they are able to submit a leave request or ask for assignment to a different ship, these requests can be made at any time after that six-month period. Detailers cannot predict when requests will be forthcoming. There are times when mariners have to wait a long period of time for a billet to open up and others when there is no one available to fill a relief request. The pattern that seems to emerge is not a desirable one from the detailer's viewpoint: many people want to take leave during the major holidays and for a period during the summer. There is little the detailer can do to balance the pool of requests received during the peak periods. The problem also appears to be exacerbated for some job ratings which have a smaller pool of mariners. One senior detailer did point out that if someone has been aboard a ship for a very long time (e.g., more than two years) and another mariner has been waiting ashore for a long period of time, she can involuntarily relieve the person who is currently on board the ship. He would be required to take leave for a period of time and then enter the placement pool for a new assignment. [Ref. 11]

After a mariner has been selected for an assignment, the placement officer is responsible for verifying that he possesses a proper and current license and/or endorsement. If the mariner is assigned to a ship requiring a higher security clearance (i.e., the Personnel Reliability Program for ammunition ships), she must ensure that such clearance has been approved. A request is submitted to the travel section for preparation of airline tickets and advance travel payment if necessary. The mariner must also have an appropriate visa or passport.

A message must be sent to the ship to inform them of the time and date of the prospective arrival. If an area clearance message is required, the detailer must see that one is prepared. The detailing section also updates the mariner's payroll information by preparing personnel action worksheets (Standard Form 50) to reflect that he will be transferred to a shipboard pay category. Lastly, travel orders are generated.

Timing often becomes an important factor in the completion of the above listed duties. There is usually a window of time within which the detailer works with a mariner who is undergoing a routine re-assignment to relieve someone on a ship. This mariner may have been at Building 310 for about a week while he completed his medical screening, negotiated orders and had the pay, tickets and travel plans finalized. On some occasions, a vacancy will arise unexpectedly -- the very definition of the term vacancy implies that it is an unplanned occurrence because unfilled billets on MSC ships can create problems with USCG requirements. When short-fused vacancies occur, the detailing section finds that the need

to expedite the transfer processes results in a high degree of inconvenience for the mariner and a circumvention of the normal rules for making an assignment. In some circumstances the decision which has to be made is reviewed by the Port Captain, the Civilian Personnel Officer and, in the most difficult cases, by the Chief Staff Officer.

## D. DETAILING AT THE ATLANTIC AREA COMMAND

The Atlantic Area Command is located in Building 42 at the Military Ocean Terminal in Bayonne, New Jersey. Bayonne is minutes from New York and located conveniently close to the Newark International Airport. MSC occupies the entire fourth deck of a sprawling converted warehouse. The building has a pleasant professional appearance and is easily accessible on the well-kept Army base.

MSCLANT has administrative responsibility for thirteen NFAF ships on the East Coast: there are seven oilers, three dry cargo ships, and three ocean-going tugboats. Although there are port facilities available at the Bayonne ocean terminal, the great majority of Atlantic fleet ships operate from the Norfolk Naval Base. In the minds of most of the mariners Norfolk is looked upon as the homeport although this is not in fact the case -- this distinction is important for the purposes of earning shore leave and travel allowances when they must report to the personnel offices. Norfolk is the principal base of operation of the MSCLANT ships and a significant number of mariners have established a home within commuting distance of the port. The ships in this fleet will usually deploy for a three month period and then return to Norfolk for two or three months. While the ship is in port mariners

can go home at the end of a duty day -- they are able to maintain a more satisfying home and family life than the mariners of MSCPAC are able to. For this reason mariners in the Atlantic fleet tend to remain with the command and, in general, stay onboard a given ship for a longer period of time. The command reaps the benefit of mariners utilizing the training they have received and the expertise developed from doing the same job for a extended period of time.

At Bayonne there are two-person placement officer work teams. The senior detailer (GS-11/12) manages officer assignments in consultation with the Port Captain and the Port Engineer. Her assistant is primarily responsible for detailing the unlicensed mariners. There is no designated processor in the work unit -- processing of personnel actions is handled by the clerical staff who are situated on the other side of large office. They return completed SF-50s to the placement officers who verify that the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) database changes are accurate. Even with the proliferation of computer systems throughout the personnel departments at both Area Commands, one observes an enormous volume of paperwork which must be prepared and double checked for every action associated with each mariner.

## E. SUMMARY

The detailing operations at MSCPAC and MSCLANT are guided by regulations contained in the Civilian Marine Personnel Instruction (CMPI), the thousand-plus page "bible" which governs the hiring, management, and utilization of mariners. Detailers are also required to assign mariners to ships in accordance with mandated manning scales, local standard

operating procedures, MSC instructions, and federal Office of Personnel Management regulations. One therefore observes the same broad practices at both offices, most specifically in the maintenance of lists which are used to monitor a mariner's time ashore and his priority for the next available assignment. The same functions are performed to ensure tickets, current licenses, travel advances and passports are in the mariner's hands after an assignment has been made.

In recent years both commands have used TQL principles to chart their processes and identify key decision points. What has not been captured in these charts, however, is the wealth of information about a mariner's abilities and the ship's unique operating environment which the detailer must call upon in making an assignment decision.

# III. CIVILIAN MARINER PERCEPTIONS OF DETAILING

## A. BACKGROUND

### 1. Key Factors Influence Assignment Decisions

Detailing is the assignment of civilian mariners to any one of 30 ships in the Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force. Each of the ships can be placed in one of eight different classes based on the size/tonnage of the vessel. The mission to be performed is dictated by the size/tonnage of each ship. As well as different mission-related functions on each class of ship, there are differences in working and living conditions and in the pay scales. After giving consideration to these factors, the detailer must look at available vacancies on all ships and decide where a person would best be utilized. In arriving at their own decisions about a preferred assignment, mariners also evaluate the different factors so that they can request the most appropriate ship at a point in time.

The Port Captain and Chief Engineer oversee career management of officers and have an active role in determining their placement on the ships. As managers with significant responsibilities for shipboard operations, officers are paid very good salaries and can usually count on having relatively spacious private accommodations. For the unlicensed mariners, salary levels and the quality of accommodations can change greatly depending on certain characteristics of the ships. For these reasons the following discussion will focus primarily on the unlicensed mariners.

### 2. Base Pay and Overtime Hours

There are several different pay categories which are based on the size of the ship (tonnage) for the deck and supply officers and on the magnitude of the engine's horsepower for the engineering department officers. The unlicensed mariners also earn different levels of pay based on the ship's size. The lowest pay level is associated with the ocean-going tugboats, the smallest of the ships.

Most unlicensed mariners receive a low level of base pay. (The base pay for a Steward Utility is $14,800; for an Ordinary Seaman, $14,400; and a Wiper, $15,700. All are entry level positions.) The pay low pay levels were established with the understanding that while at sea mariners will normally work every day of the week. The mariner must be compensated, with overtime pay, for each hour above forty that he is required to work. After overtime pay, which is earned at significantly higher rates, is added in, the mariner can take home a handsome paycheck. It is therefore extremely important to the mariner that he has an opportunity to supplement his salary by working overtime hours.

### 3. Living Conditions on Ships

Mariners distinguish ships by the living conditions on board. Oilers have been constructed to MSC standards which mirror accommodation standards in the commercial maritime industry. COMSCINST 9330.6D [Ref. 12] promulgates specific sizes, furnishings, materials, and occupancy of living quarters on all classes of ships. It specifies that all ship operating personnel shall be housed in one-person staterooms to the greatest extent possible.

Because MSC's dry cargo ships were formerly operated by the Navy, their military-style accommodations must be upgraded to conform to civilian standards. After the command takes control of such a vessel, it is sent to a shipyard for overhaul of internal operating systems and conversion of berthing spaces. MSC reserves the right to consider economic feasibility and the remaining useful life of the vessel in deciding how much money to invest in the conversion. [Ref. 12: p. 2] Not all the former Navy ships have been converted to provide private berthing because it is not economically feasible to do so. Many mariners therefore see this as another factor to be weighed when discussing an assignment. They ask themselves whether an added ten percent pay differential compensates for the disadvantages of open bay berthing (i.e., twenty persons in one large area with racks stacked two-high).

It should be noted that this ten percent pay differential is not given to MSCPAC mariners. Significant differences in pay and work rules exist between the two fleets as a result of separate union representation. Because MSCPAC ships are forward-deployed, mariners are paid a salary which is based on a six-day work week. MSCLANT maintains a five-day work week for the purpose of calculating overtime pay.

#### 4. Working Conditions

Another important factor which differentiates ships is onboard working conditions. Because the dry stores ships are not as automated as the oilers and ammunition ships, and a great deal more physical labor is required. Mariners who work in the supply department's entry level jobs have to lift heavy boxes and move cargo pallets. The dry stores underway

replenishment (UNREP) function certainly requires more physical labor than does the UNREP transfer of oil. Personnel on dry stores ships in the Atlantic fleet earn a fifteen percent pay differential tied to a union contract negotiated with private shipping companies to compensate for harder physical labor involved. (This extra fifteen percent does not apply to MSCPAC mariners.)

Mariners also make a comparison with tugboats, ships which are far smaller than the oilers and dry stores ships. In the minds of many, the work on a tug is very different from that on board the other ships. One O-5 equivalent officer with previous work experience on tugboats said that masters of these vessels are required to stand watches in port. Other officers said that tugboats are difficult duty because they are out to sea for far longer periods of time than other ships. Also, with the vessels' smaller size come smaller accommodations. Unlicensed mariners have to share staterooms on tugboats.

It is generally said by the unlicensed mariners that, for those assigned to a tug, there is the opportunity to earn a great deal of overtime money because the "ship is out at sea all the time." Mariners do not normally earn overtime pay when the ship is in port in Norfolk -- they take advantage of a chance to go home at night. In addition, because the ship is not performing a sponsor's tasking when it is tied up at the pier, there is little justification for most crew members to work extra hours.

### 5. Promotion Boards

The promotion system is an interesting and complex phenomenon. Although promotion boards for some positions are scheduled annually, the detailer is able to influence the timetable of the promotion system in an important way. If, in the process of reviewing her inventory to identify individuals to assign to upcoming relief duties, she realizes that there are not enough qualified mariners available to distribute throughout the fleet, she may make a request through her chain of command to have a promotion board convened. The MSCLANT promotion boards are made up of three persons, one of whom is a placement officer, who review candidates' records to identify individuals who have demonstrated the ability to perform at a higher level. (MSCPAC boards usually have eight members.) As board members review each record they assign points based on the strength of a person's past performance, evaluations, recommendations, training, etc. At the end of that process all the candidates are ranked according to the number of points earned. The board will choose a natural break point in the rankings -- if seven third officers are needed, they will publish a list which shows the top seven or eight mariners. The top eight choices will be designated as "best qualified" and those others who make the list will be designated as "qualified." As openings arise for third officers (from relief requests), mariners in the "best qualified" category will be promoted.

Promotion boards create opportunities for mariners in lower positions. After experienced people have been promoted, new people are hired to fill vacant entry-level

positions. The promotion board system is also a source of confusion for some mariners. Many have said that they do now know what exactly is needed to earn designation as "best qualified." Others failed to understand why it is that the people who are said to be "qualified" are never promoted.

### 6. Tour Lengths

Another interesting aspect of mariner shipboard life is the procedure by which a person goes about accomplishing a transfer from one ship to another. A mariner must complete a minimum of six months on one ship before a transfer or relief can be requested. MSC ships are not only at sea for very long periods, they are required to have a full manning complement as specified by the USCG. If a person wants to take leave for a normal period of time, usually 30 days, he submits a leave request through his shipboard chain of command to his detailer. In due course a relief is sent to the ship to replace him. After his relief arrives the mariner is said to be "paid off" the ship, meaning that the purser closes out his pay and personnel records on the ship. The mariner departs, takes leave, then reports to the personnel office at the Area Command to start the assignment process again. So, in standard practice, in order for a person to take more than a few days of leave, he has to accept being paid off a ship. A person may be able to, at the discretion of the master, take ship's leave. In this way he is able to have a brief vacation for a few days while retaining his billet. Ship's leave is usually granted when the ship is in port and operational commitments allow the person to be spared.

Most mariners work seven days a week, particularly when their ship is deployed. If a person chooses to *not* take 30 days of leave, he could work for a year or more of seven-day work weeks. This does not appear to be an unusual occurrence among mariners. The point to be made is that in MSCLANT there seems to be no strictly enforced upper limit on the time period mariners can stay on board one ship. Downstream this tends to contribute to the unpredictability surrounding when billets will open up. It can take an uncomfortably long period of time for an assignment to become available for a person. One MSCLANT deck officer spoke of another who, after he took his last vacation, had to wait four months before he got his next assignment. When mariners report to the Area Command to wait for a new assignment (and thus avoid going into a leave without pay status), they earn substantially less money than they would onboard ship. The duty status pay is at the lowest rate and there is no chance to earn overtime.

There is less likelihood in the Pacific fleet of people staying on ships for extremely long periods. The Crewing Branch considers a tour completed at the end of six months and rotates mariners after that time if others are waiting for assignments. Because MSCPAC ships remain forward-deployed in overseas ports, mariners do not have the opportunity to spend time with family members until they are off the ship and in a leave status. It is therefore in their best interest to take leave for a full 30 days as frequently as the rules permit.

## B. MARINERS' CONCERNS

Because assignment to a ship will have a considerable impact on a mariner's life for the following six months to two years, they desire to have an input into and exercise a degree of control over the decision to be made. Each mariner seeks to maximize the benefits remaining after he weighs tradeoffs among conflicting factors. The decision elements he keeps uppermost in mind are the opportunity to earn overtime pay to supplement a low base salary, the habitability conditions of a ship, the specifics of his duties (which can be more rigorous and physically demanding on certain ships), the officer cadre on board, and the chance to hone skills in a different work environment. Although mariners can appreciate that the degree of randomness in the rotation dates of people assigned to 30 ships makes it difficult for detailers to fulfill all their preferences at any given point in time, they are nonetheless very conscious of how the detailing process works for the person who comes before and behind them during an assignment window. Each mariner wants the assurance that he has done the best for himself in an assignment and that others of his rank have not received an undue advantage.

In an ideal world one would expect to find that all mariners would be equally satisfied with the detailing system. Interviews with 35 officers and unlicensed civilian mariners in the Atlantic fleet indicated that many mariners hold a dim view of the detailing process. Some of the sentiments expressed went beyond issues within the span of control of the typical placement officer. This is not surprising since mariners spend most of their working life at

sea and their placement officer assumes a management responsibility for them when they are temporarily ashore. In the mariners' minds they see and feel the effects of policy issues which impact their life at sea. It is to be expected that a gripe about that policy would be broadly tied to the person and the process which sent them to ships at sea.

### 1. Importance of Working Overtime Hours

One officer maintains that people willingly take an assignment to a tugboat only if they are promised a promotion. This is because, he maintains, "on a tug the pay is one third less than on an oiler, living conditions are worse, and the ship spends more time at sea." On a tug, a master has to work more than he would on other ship types, in part because he has fewer people to whom he can delegate duties, and as a measure to constrain the amount of overtime dollars which must be paid to the first officer. The master stands watches in port, works longer hours, makes less money and performs other tasks he would not have to on a bigger ship (i.e., he must act as the emergency medical officer and be supply management qualified).

Unlicensed mariners take a different view of the benefits of a tour on a tugboat. They maintain that one has a chance to work "a lot" of overtime (32 hours or more per week) on a tug. For this reason they complain that there is favoritism being shown by detailers who allow positions to be held for certain people. These mariners believe that some people stay on tugs for five to six years and thus there never seem to be any openings on these ships. Not only is there a problem of people "homesteading on the small ships," it is argued, when an opening does become available, it may be given to someone who is waiting at the Area

Command for his next assignment. The presumably undeserving selectee was in the right place at the right time when the placement officer needed a relief on a small ship. The contradiction in the juxtaposed explanations is evident. There will always be someone else in the pool of candidates who will be given an assignment if it opens up on short notice. However, the crux of the complaint appears to revolve around the lack of an enforced upper limit on a person's time on a ship. Unless a clear policy is spelled out and applied to everyone in a systematic manner, the MSCLANT detailers will remain subject to allegations of special treatment. It is not clear to many mariners why they do not get the chance to serve on all the types of ships.

### 2. Differences in Pay and Working Conditions on Ships

Two very senior officers expressed concern over the quality of life on ships; they believe that they are "seeing a troubling divergence between ship types." They also believe the disparity is affecting manning. The oilers are viewed by most people as "palaces" because all crew members have spacious private staterooms. At the other end of the spectrum are hospital ships which, the officers say, are substandard even by Navy standards. While the earlier converted ships met MSC standards, the officers say there now seems to be less money available to put into habitability upgrades. As money gets tighter, they believe there is a bending of standards. These officers expect placement officers to have difficulty in motivating crew members to go to certain ships.

Although MSCLANT mariners receive an extra ten percent pay to offset the open bay berthing on dry cargo ships, there are some who maintain that the additional money does not compensate for the conditions they must live in. These people will try to avoid duty on what they view as less desirable ships. One mariner said "a lot" of people refuse to go to these ships. He believes that "this is where friendship with the detailer and politics" come into play in enabling some people to stay off dry cargo ships.

A few mariners expressed the view that detailers have to make promises to get people to go on some ships. From the perspective of these managers and workers, there is justifiable merit in a detailer's promising something to a person after a tour is over. However, complaints are sometimes voiced that detailers fail to uphold their end of the bargain when discussions about orders roll around again. Mariners grumble that detailers often deny having made a promise to them.

Some mariners take note of the fact that in the last two to three years dry cargo ships are the only ones on which mariners have had a pay raise. These are mechanized ships which, while they have material handling equipment for movement of cargo, require a great deal of physical labor and heavy lifting. In 1995 the maritime unions negotiated a fifteen percent pay raise with commercial dry cargo shipping companies. Since MSC is required to adjust wages to that of private sector shipping, mariners on MSCLANT dry cargo ships also received that raise.

While there are some mariners who prefer to forego duty on dry cargo ships, there are those who stress that they have not had enough of an opportunity to work on one of these ships, especially since they are the only ones getting a union-influenced pay raise. The sentiment was voiced that some people are staying too long on these and other types of ships and are therefore denying the opportunity for extra pay, variety and new experiences to other mariners. These mariners charge that favoritism allows this state of affairs to exist.

### 3. Leave

Leave seems to be the principal source of dissatisfaction for mariners. The ten individuals who spoke at length on the subject expressed very strong feelings. The small amount of leave earned per month and the policy which puts a 30-day cap on a normal leave request elicited much criticism. A mariner with less than three years of government service will accrue 13 days of annual leave per year. (He will also accrue shore leave at the rate of one day for every fifteen consecutive days assigned to a vessel, or two days per month.) One person said that he felt mariners need more leave than anything else, even pay. Another said mariners get very little time off considering what they have to put up with (their jobs are much more demanding than their commercial counterparts) and the fact that they have to work a great deal of overtime hours to make a "decent" wage. A third mariner said he is out to sea for nine months of the year during which time he works fourteen-hour days. He went on to say that "if you think about your family, it will drive you crazy."

Some who say MSC's civilian mariners' leave entitlement is insufficient point out that private sector mariners sail for eight months and earn four months of paid vacation. Maybe even more significantly bothersome to the MSC mariner than the amount of earned leave is the fact that they feel severely constrained in the length of leave they can take at any given time. People who have been with the command for many years and have accumulated a great deal of leave on the books are told that they must submit a request for 30 days leave. Toward the end of the 30-day period, they would have to call their placement officer and request an extension if they wanted to have additional time off. Mariners are unhappy at not being able to take a three- or four-month vacation, even if they have the time on the books, as commercial mariners are able to do.

A large number of the unlicensed mariners who work for MSCLANT say that not only is the 30-day limit an unfair requirement given the long hours they work while being at sea for several months, but, they also believe the problem is compounded by a tendency of placement officers to call them back from leave before their 30 days have expired. Resentment about this practice is felt by a broad cross section of Atlantic fleet mariners. There are some who say that they deliberately give the placement office inaccurate data so they cannot be contacted at their leave address. If the mariner's leave expires and he does not obtain an approved extension from his detailer, she will send a letter to his home informing him that he must return to work or face disciplinary action. The mariners refer to these letters as "nasty-grams" because they think the tone of command and implied threat fails to respect

their status as professional mariners who have family commitments and a need to revitalize their spirits.

It is said by many mariners that MSCLANT does a good job of getting them off the ship on time but that they frequently call people back early. They are thus unable to enjoy their full 30 days of leave. One detailer said she tries to accommodate mariners' requests for extra time but that there are not enough people available to allow every mariner to take more than 30-60 days of leave. The detailers also complain about the difficulty they have in contacting some mariners because of their failure to provide current phone numbers and addresses (especially during leave periods).

It thus appears that some mariners use their own method of achieving their goal of getting more time off. The detailers can send the notification letters but cannot take disciplinary action unless the mariner's time away is egregiously long. If a mariner uses up his leave, or does not get an approved extension, he may be placed in a LWOP status. This is not, however, a disciplinary action.

Not all mariners engage in the practices which skirt the normal leave procedures. For that reason some mariners charge that there are those who know how to "make the system work for them." Although detailers do not condone the practices of not providing current location information and/or not reporting back from leave on the assigned date, their options are limited. For those mariners who make the decision to report as directed, it can seem as if they are being shortchanged. The system as it is currently structured does not prevent some

conscientious people from being called back early because others elect to act in their own best interest and face the consequences of ignoring the detailer's notification letter.

Improper use of leave also has an impact on the charge that some people remain too long on certain types of ships. Although a person is required to complete a minimum tour of six months, absence of a systematically enforced upper limit in MSCLANT has repercussions. If a mariner is able to take ship's leave he can enjoy a vacation and return to his ship without having to submit a leave request to his placement officer. Another mariner who may want to serve on that ship would be unable to because a relief opportunity is not identified in the detailer's tracking system.

It is clear that the command can benefit from people working for a moderate period of time in a job they have gained proficiency in, and can save funds which would otherwise have been used for travel to the Area Command and then to a new ship. However, the apparent absence of tight controls and consistent actions to equalize tour lengths leaves the detailers open to charges of favoritism, an oft-heard word. Mariners who are unhappy with the practice's impact on their own opportunities blame the detailers for allowing it to occur.

#### 4. Favoritism

One mariner who had only been with the command for six months but who had been dissatisfied with an inability to effect a transfer from the steward utility entry level position to the deck department posed a disturbing question. This mariner wondered, "What are the procedures which ensure consistent treatment for everyone?" Unable to make progress with

the detailer in trying to obtain the transfer, the mariner was told by many long-time employees that in the past they had seen other people in the same circumstances win a transfer. It may have been that the mariner's request could not have been accommodated because he was still in a one-year probationary period. An apparent failure of the detailer to communicate an appropriate explanation left the mariner open to being swayed by "sea stories" of mariners who are convinced that favoritism is rampant.

There are some mariners who say that the detailing system has gotten better in the last few years. Indeed, ten mariners said they were satisfied with their detailer and the process. There does, however, seem to be an inability of some people to forget problems which they experienced in the past, probably because the incident seemed very significant at the time. There is a feeling of distrust that is conveyed to new employees. It may eventually shade their outlook and influence their actions. One cannot fail to note that mariners feel a sense of fear and distrust of the detailers because of the amount of control they wield. Many mariners asked that their name not be used in this study because they are convinced, and know of specific incidents, where people have paid a price for questioning a detailer's decision. It is alleged that retribution is taken if a mariner "gets on the bad side of his detailer."

### 5. Training

MSC has an extensive civil service marine personnel career development program. COMSCINST 12410.25B [Ref. 13] establishes the training courses required for persons occupying all shipboard billets. It sets forth a requirement for basic courses such as

firefighting, small arms training, and Navy Occupational Health and Safety (NAVOSH), which must be repeated every three years. There are opportunities for mariners to attend specialized schools offered by the Navy as well as those offered by private maritime institutions and restaurant schools. A cursory glance through the instruction reveals a list of over a hundred courses.

The availability of a wide range of training opportunities elicited positive and negative opinions from mariners. There are many who are happy at having received training when they requested it. One unlicensed deck mariner said he has received all the training classes he could possibly take, even classes for officers. He is a graduate of a merchant marine academy who is striving for a promotion to third officer. He expressed the idea that he has been allowed to take officer courses so that he would remain committed to staying with the command until a promotion occurs. He said in effect, "they want to keep me."

One gets a distinct impression, after talking with many mariners, that a great deal of training is provided to MSC personnel. Training is normally accomplished during the period when a mariner transfers from one ship to another. Before a mariner reports to the Area Command to negotiate orders, the detailer will review his record to determine if he is current on all his required training. When he meets with the placement officer the mariner also has the opportunity to request that he be scheduled for classes which he believes will enhance his job performance. The detailer will have the training department immediately schedule him for the class if the mariner does not have to immediately report to a ship.

There are a significant number of mariners who hold the opinion that detailers schedule people for training classes in order to "kill some time" while they wait for a position on a ship to open up or to "pacify" a mariner who may be unhappy about something else. One O-5 equivalent officer said, "There is a haphazard allocation of training opportunities."

One encounters many mariners who have completed classes needed for positions senior to those which they currently occupy. Mariners seem to believe that it is in their best interest to have completed a particular training class in case a position comes open which requires that training, rather than run the risk of being by-passed if a detailer needs a person with a particular qualification to go to a ship right away. Since many mariners have at some time been in a position where they received training while waiting for an open billet, there is now a self-perpetuating incentive to be trained as early as possible since one's peers have already done so.

### 6. Promotion Opportunities

One mariner said "MSC has never been good at assigning people in a way that best utilizes their talents and training." This complaint may be warranted by several considerations. First, there are many people who possess much more training and the knowledge and skills that come with them than they are required to use in their present jobs. There are a number of people who, of necessity, received temporary promotions to a higher position, but eventually returned to their lower permanent grade. Although in recent years the practice of temporary promotions has diminished, and is now discouraged, there are those

who remain frustrated by their inability to obtain a position for which they, on one or more occasion, demonstrated they were qualified.

A full one third of the unlicensed mariners interviewed said that there is not enough opportunity for promotion. The fact that so many have completed a wealth of training only serves to amplify the frustration over the paucity of billets which come open at higher levels. An unlicensed mariner said, "MSC encourages you to improve yourself, but what is the use? There is nowhere to go." An MSCLANT officer said "there are currently 40 people with licenses who are sailing as unlicensed seamen." Among many long time mariners there is an undercurrent of resentment against those who are graduates of the maritime academies. Mariners who earn their license and position through years of on-the-job experience, the "hawsepipers," believe that MSC places too much emphasis on promoting the college graduates. They also cite this as a reason there are few long term promotion opportunities for them.

The mariners who complain about not being assigned to jobs that make the best use of their talents frequently say that they believe the detailers see them as numbers needed to fill slots. They believe that if the detailer has difficulty filling a billet she "begins to see a numbers game" which does not give adequate consideration to the impact of the particular billet on the ship's operation. Eight mariners questioned the adequacy of placement officers' knowledge about shipboard operations and the integral job requirements of the person who fills one of a number of openings on a ship. Several mariners who were particularly

displeased with the detailers' performance said they were not entirely surprised since the people who are now detailers are "no more than glorified secretaries." A couple of people recommended that former mariners be recruited to serve as placement officers.

Another large segment of mariners (7 of 35) said that the personal relationship between a mariner and the detailer influences the assignment that is made. These mariners seem to feel that they are somehow at a disadvantage when they compete for an opening against someone who is on "very friendly terms" with his detailer. Placement officers are required to maintain a chronological listing of people waiting for an assignment. The mariner who has been ashore the longest should be assigned first. The mariners who decry the impact of personal relationships appear to question the objectivity of the lists as well as the completeness of the information about all possible openings which is provided by the detailers.

Although the complaints about the detailers appear harshly critical, a large group of mariners (10 of 35) said they were satisfied with the way detailing has worked for them. They did not cite specific things which pleased them.

Of the seven Pacific fleet mariners who were interviewed, all expressed satisfaction with the process and with their own detailer. Most of these persons did, however, say that they know other mariners who were dissatisfied and who also felt that favoritism existed.

### 7. Crisis Management

One MSCLANT Supply officer said "crisis management permeates the assignment of people to ships." This sentiment was echoed with disturbing frequency. Officers who expressed this opinion were primarily concerned with what they saw as an ongoing need to "rob Peter to pay Paul" to enable ships to go to sea. They argue that the command does not have enough people to allow afloat personnel to take adequate leave, be trained, be sick (the average age of the mariners is 47 [Ref. 8]), handle emergency situations, and accomplish the ships' missions.

The unlicensed mariners see crisis management in the manner in which they frequently are called back from leave early to fill an opening. They believe there is insufficient and ineffective planning in the management of personnel. This group believes there are enough mariners but that detailers don't do an effective job of tracking the status and location of every mariner. A few said that they continued to get communications sent from the Area Command to their old ship for three to four months after they had reported aboard another ship. They are also very dissatisfied at the frequency with which they get orders on extremely short notice and are given one or two day's notice to report to the next port.

### 8. Reporting to the Area Command Personnel Office

After completing a period of leave, MSCLANT mariners are required to report to Bayonne to receive a medical examination, scheduled training, and new orders. There appears to be widespread doubt about the wisdom of requiring mariners who are based in

Norfolk to travel to the Area Command for services which could be readily obtained at Navy facilities in that area. In the vast majority of cases MSCLANT mariners will be transferred to another ship that is homeported in Norfolk. They therefore see little economic logic in paying a person to travel to Bayonne for medical screening when there are medical facilities in Norfolk (military-operated as well as some which could be privately contracted). Also, there are numerous Navy schools in the Norfolk area which could fill a good part of mariners' training needs. Many mariners would prefer to see electronic transmission of orders to the subarea command, MSC Middle Atlantic (MSCMIDLANT), in Norfolk to cut down on the expenses incurred (for hotel and per diem) when they travel to Bayonne for these purposes.

There is also a widely held feeling of dissatisfaction with the quality of services received from the Personnel Office in Bayonne. The usual refrain is: "The people there have a 9 to 5 mentality. They don't understand what it is like to be at sea where you can't get away to handle a problem." The mariners believe there is not enough of a focus on and appreciation for their needs as customers. Several mariners asserted that they had, at one time or another, overheard someone at the Personnel Office say, "This job would be fine if it wasn't for the mariners." For reasons such as these, a large number of mariners believe there is a need for an afloat personnel customer service desk which would be readily accessible and which would serve as a coordinator in helping mariners to resolve problems. Rather than the present system which often has the mariner going from one person to another

to resolve a pay or travel claim dispute, the service desk would work the problem through all involved parties and report the final answer to the mariner.

Because MSCPAC ships are forward-deployed and a relief almost always has to be flown to a ship, those mariners did not argue against a need to report to the Personnel Office in Oakland. It is also less likely that there would be a single alternative location at which to receive medical screening and training. The customer service desk would be a valuable addition here as well.

# IV. AFLOAT PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT (APM) CENTER

## A. BACKGROUND

### 1. MSC Inaugurates New Command Structure

In February 1996 MSC inaugurated a new command organization. Over the course of the preceding year the command had given careful consideration to re-alignment of its major business functions under a new program management structure. There are six programs in MSC's new organization: the Naval Fleet Auxiliary force, Special Mission Ships, Prepositioning, Ship Introduction, Intermodal, and Sealift. The command views each program as a skilled, modular unit with a wide array of resources that can respond quickly and efficiently to customer needs. [Ref. 14: p. 5]

### 2. APM Center Established

At the same time in February, the command announced that an Afloat Personnel Management (APM) Center will be established at a location on the East Coast, specifically the Tidewater area of Virginia. The APM will combine and standardize personnel support for MSC's 3,400 civil service mariners. In addition, there will be satellite service centers on both the East and West Coasts to provide primary civil service marine personnel support. After the APM becomes operational, union jurisdiction for the civilian mariners will remain the same as it has been in the past. [Ref. 14 : p. 23]

It should be reiterated that both the MSCPAC and MSCLANT are currently located on bases which have been slated for closure by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC). In the August 1995 edition of MSC's inhouse newspaper, ADM Quast was quoted as saying: "Even though the BRAC decision was out of our hands, it presents us the opportunity to relocate closer to our fleet customers, and that's clearly one of our reinvention goals." [Ref. 15: p. 2] The necessity of leaving the bases in Bayonne, NJ and Oakland, CA appears to be one of the principal drivers of the decision to establish the APM Center and the satellite offices in different cities. Current plans call for satellite offices in Norfolk, VA and San Diego, CA.

### 3. Decentralized Detailing

The Appendix depicts the broad outline of the APM Center's structure. [Ref. 14: p. 22] The most striking feature of the planned APM organization is that there will be a satellite office on each coast. When the APM Working Group initially developed the recommendation for consolidation of personnel functions, it was believed that detailing would be performed at the APM Center while still maintaining separate mariner pools based on people's preference for either coast. The command would gain the added flexibility, in emergencies, of being able to assign a mariner from either pool. After extensive discussions and considerable input from the mariners, it became clear that they strongly objected to the possibility of eventual co-mingling of the pools. Also, the many unions and bargaining units involved showed a staunch reluctance to abdicate jurisdictional authority. Therefore, a separation of the two mariner

pools had to be accomplished by removing the detailing function from the APM Center. Detailing will be performed at each of the satellite offices. [Ref. 8]

### 4. Original Conception of APM Center

During the early planning phases, it was anticipated that those personnel management functions which do not require daily interaction with the mariners would be performed in the APM Center. If the mariner must have personal contact with a personnel specialist to ensure effective and timely completion of an activity, that function would be accomplished at the satellite offices. The command believed that the new consolidated structure would result in consistency in the application of personnel management policies, practices and procedures. Another expected benefit was infrequent visits by mariners to the APM Center: Travel expenses would fall because the satellite offices would provide all the services mariners normally needed. And, some streamlining of personnel would eventually result in cost savings. The satellite offices were to be located close to the waterfront and would be dedicated to providing support services for mariners. [Ref. 16]

## B. TASKS TO BE PERFORMED AT THE SATELLITE OFFICES

The command has not yet published a detailed organization chart and manning document for the APM Center and the satellite offices. In the early planning stages it was anticipated that each satellite office would have eight persons assigned; the remaining employees would work at the APM Center. Conversations held in March with employees at

MSCPAC indicated that these numbers were still being reviewed. The most current information pointed to the assignment of eleven employees at each satellite office [Ref. 8].

It is anticipated that the satellite offices will perform the following functions that are "visible" to mariners [Ref. 17: p. 2]:

- Track mariner training, qualifications, and career development progress
- Document mariner ship assignment preferences
- Make mariner ship and training assignments
- Arrange for employee transportation to ship
- Arrange local accommodations for mariner while he/she awaits transportation or training
- Counsel mariners on employee benefits, pre-retirement planning, and availability of services through the Civilian Employee Assistance Program (CEAP)
- Work with mariner to update information in his/her official personnel file; forward new data to APM Center
- Act as local Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program representative; work with APM and DOD personnel as required
- Provide counseling on merit promotion opportunities and requirements
- Work with mariner and APM Center in administering merit promotion program
- Work with mariner and APM Center in handling adverse actions
- Act as local representative for employee in labor relations issues
- Manage local drug testing program

## C. TASKS TO BE PERFORMED AT THE APM CENTER

These functions and services are primarily "invisible" to the mariners and are expected to be transferred to the consolidated APM Center [Ref. 17]:

- Maintain employees' official personnel files
- Process mariner pay
- Verify employee documentation
- Perform mariner recruiting and hiring functions
- Manage mariner merit promotion programs
- Administer incentive award programs
- Administer discipline and process adverse actions; work with satellite office representatives as required
- Process personnel actions and related data entry
- Arrange training courses for mariners
- Manage EEO program in consultation with satellite offices
- Manage mariner labor relations/employee relations programs; work with satellite offices representatives as required
- Manage mariner workers' compensation claims
- Provide satellite offices with access to required medical resources for mariner physical exams and evaluation of employee fitness for shipboard duty

## D. MARINERS' PERCEPTION OF APM CENTER CONCEPT

Most mariners appear to support the idea that it would be beneficial to have the detailers located close to the waterfront. They also see great value in having a "service desk" established within the satellite offices. In this way they would be able to have ready access to one person who would be responsible for investigating a problem which may involve many functional areas (e.g., travel claims, pay, benefits). This person would monitor the progress of the issue through the entire system and report back to the mariner with a single answer or resolution of the problem.

In the early days of the APM Working Group's discussions, it was announced that the satellite offices would function primarily as service field offices, in effect a "one stop service desk" which would be more responsive to the problems of afloat personnel. Under the presently planned structure, which requires that detailing be conducted at the satellite offices, and which places only eleven employees at each of those sites, it seems less clear that there will be enough staff available to provide the more personalized assistance that many mariners believe is necessary. Although discussions on the APM billet structure are ongoing, the most current information put forward by the Headquarters Personnel Directorate indicated that the following eleven staff positions are likely to be assigned to the satellite offices [Ref. 8]:

- Satellite Manager (GS-13)
- Supervisor of Crewing/Detailing (GS-12)
- Four Placement Officers (2 GS-11 and 2 GS-9)

- Two Employee Relations Specialists (GS-12 and GS-7)
- Disbursing Clerk (GS-11)
- Training Specialist (GS-9)
- Payroll Clerk (GS-7)

Each placement officer performs a broad range of tasks for 400-600 mariners. They work very hard in an often stressful environment to fill short-fused requirements. They must also balance personal discussions with mariners about things like benefits, promotion opportunities, and possible ship assignments, with the time-critical responsibility for ensuring that a huge volume of paperwork and computerized data are current and accurate. Because at the satellite offices the placement officers would be only a short walk or drive from the ships, one would expect to see them even more pressed for time than they now are. Mariners would be able to drop by more frequently to discuss issues which they may have made a brief phone call about before. If the goal is to provide improved service to the customers, it appears that additional staffing at the satellite offices will be required.

For a number of years mariners attached to MSCLANT ships complained bitterly about having money summarily removed from their paycheck if a travel claim was not settled within a ten day period [Ref. 18]. Increasingly mariners began to appeal to the staff of the Disbursing Office at the subarea command (MSCMIDLANT) in Norfolk for help in rectifying their problems. (On some occasions mariners received no pay because of the amount of

money that was taken from them). As a result of the active intervention of the staff of MSCMIDLANT, there has been a considerable improvement in the process used to reconcile travel claims. Mariners in Norfolk seldom experience a problem in this area any more. Each day, one of the disbursing office workers coordinates the processing of travel claims though the Personnel Support Detachment in Norfolk and the disbursing office at Bayonne. This example demonstrates the need for additional personnel at the satellite offices who would provide much needed customer service.

Some mariners do not expect the APM Center structure to have much of a positive impact on their shipboard lives. They are dissatisfied with policies which are set at very high levels of the organization and which are ultimately executed through the detailers. Low pay, inadequate leave, and poor habitability conditions on some ships will not change under the new APM organization. Several said they believed that COMSC staff are too far removed from the operations that happen onboard ships and that there should be more visits from people at the headquarters. Mariners believe that if headquarters staff saw the scope and caliber of work they performed and the conditions in which they lived, they would approach Congress to try to fix some of these important shortcomings. At least five mariners echoed the notion that "there is a problem with people making policy who have never sailed."

## E. SHORE STAFF PERCEPTION OF APM

During the Summer of 1995 surveys were sent to mariners to help decisionmakers evaluate their level of satisfaction with the support they received from their Personnel Offices.

The mariners also had the opportunity to express their views on the proposal to establish a consolidated APM Center. Nearly 200 inputs on these subjects were received from the mariners. The common thread in the responses was the caution against forming a single pool of mariners that would not honor geographic preferences.

It appears that no similar effort was made to canvass the opinions of the shore staff with respect to consolidation of the personnel functions. The most senior managers at each Area Command have been working with the COMSC Re-engineering Group to formulate the billet structure and functions which will reside at the APM and the satellite offices. This process continues as decisions are made about where to locate specific employees.

The command will eventually have to address the looming problem of workers who are extremely reluctant to relocate to the new sites. A significant percentage of the placement officers and other specialists at MSCLANT do not want to leave the Bayonne area. They cite a reluctance to abandon family support systems, spouses' jobs, and other economic considerations.

Employees in Oakland have expressed more of a willingness to relocate, but there appears to be a widespread conviction that the consolidation will create more problems than it will solve. These people believe that the planners have not talked to them enough to understand the full scope and challenges inherent in what they do on a daily basis. When these employees did submit inputs which proposed alternatives for new locations or for a different structuring of the personnel organization, in the minds of these employees, those

opinions were not given adequate consideration. The shore staff seem concerned that service levels will fall off under the new APM because they do not think that the consolidation is warranted. One manager argued that since the detailing of mariners could not be conducted from a single site, there is no justification for separating the other mariner support functions and placing them at some far away location. [Ref. 19]

# V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## A. BACKGROUND

The purpose of this thesis has been to describe and analyze the processes implemented by MSC's Atlantic and Pacific Area Commands in the detailing of civil service marine personnel to NFAF and selected Special Mission ships. One of the primary objectives of the study was an elucidation for the civilian mariner of the constraints and factors which drive the assignment decisions made by placement officers. At the outset of the data gathering phase of the study, it appeared that a high of degree of dissatisfaction with the detailing system existed among mariners. The finished product should shed light on what is now perceived by many mariners as a kind of black-box operation.

The secondary objective of this study was to examine whether the APM Center, by consolidating personnel functions, will create special difficulties in the detailing process. In addition, an effort was made to assess the impact of the APM Center concept on the quality of customer service provided to mariners.

## B. CONCLUSIONS

Detailing is a complex business that requires excellent judgement, a wide base of knowledge about people and ships, a helpful personality, and the ability to respond effectively under the pressure of short deadlines and constrained resources. It is a function that is

accomplished within operational commands which must ensure that ships have the highly qualified crews needed to fulfill their commitments to Naval forces.

The stated goal of the consolidation of personnel functions under an APM Center on the East Coast is to bring service providers closer to their customers and reduce duplicative operations while maintaining a high level of customer service. In the near term there is every reason to expect a degradation of the quality of service delivered to civilian mariners. It is not unusual for organizations to witness a short term dip in service levels as significant change unfolds. The command will have to work through the disruptions which will be caused by the relocation of people, offices, files, computers, etc. to one of the new sites. It will also have to cope with the anticipated loss of a large body of corporate knowledge possessed by those employees who decline to move to the APM or to the satellite offices at Norfolk or San Diego.

While a great part of employee services can be accomplished through electronic links, it is not clear that one will be able (in the near term) to count on people responding quickly and effectively in routine and emergency situations when there are reduced opportunities for face-to-face contact. The synergy and teamwork which arise when people work together everyday may not be recreated across the distance of electronic media. The result may be that mariners have to wait longer periods to obtain a decision and action on a problem.

## C. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Conduct Management Study

A comprehensive management study should be conducted at each Area Command Personnel Office. The study team should spend a minimum of 30 days at each site to assess the operational climate and the full scope of services delivered to mariners. Before support services such as employee relations, training, and personnel action processing are separated from the detailing function, decisionmakers should obtain a full appreciation for the system currently in place. The challenges that changing operational commitments (e.g, an increased operational tempo to support the Bosnia mission) present for placement officers and mariners should be examined. It may be the case that co-location under one roof of all mariner support services would be more effective and less costly in the long run.

### 2. Locate Medical Function at Satellite Offices

If the medical function is retained at the central APM there is likely to be significant increases in travel expenses. MSCPAC mariners would have to fly across the country to receive mandatory pre-deployment physical examinations. Because of the higher operational tempo and forward-deployed posture of PAC ships, mariners there rotate more frequently than those in the LANT fleet. The greater part of MSCPAC mariners would have to fly twice each year to the APM for medical screening. This is in contrast to MSCLANT mariners who tend to stay on their ships for much longer than six months and who would be within a short drive from the APM.

### 3. Establish Customer Service Desk

A dedicated customer service desk should be established at each satellite office. The manning structure now being considered does not allow for such a function. Mariners have long experienced dissatisfaction from feeling that they "get the run-around" from the personnel offices. As they are shunted from one person to another, each maintains that someone else is responsible for handling a particular issue. It is often difficult for mariners on ships to obtain access to telephones and to make contact with all the people who have some role in resolving a pay dispute, a travel claim, or benefits for a relative. One personnel specialist should be able to monitor a problem from start to finish and provide a completed answer for the mariner.

### 4. Increase Communications With Employees

By assessing the efficacy of communication channels and the adequacy of information thus far disseminated, the command's headquarters leadership may reap the benefit of greater employee support. At the present time, many employees are adamantly opposed to the prospective move to new cities and believe that the costs will outweigh the expected benefits. Among the shore staff (particularly those in the personnel offices), morale is being affected by people's resentment over a decision they do no believe adequately considered alternative solutions that would be less disruptive to their lives and to the level of service provided to mariners. A senior manager at MSCPAC said that many employees have written letters to their members of Congress to protest the planned move to an APM Center.

If MSC does not make a concerted effort to assuage employees' concerns and to reassure them that their services are valued, it runs the risk of losing an enormous amount of corporate knowledge that would be difficult to replace in the short run.

### 5. Assess Training Requirements

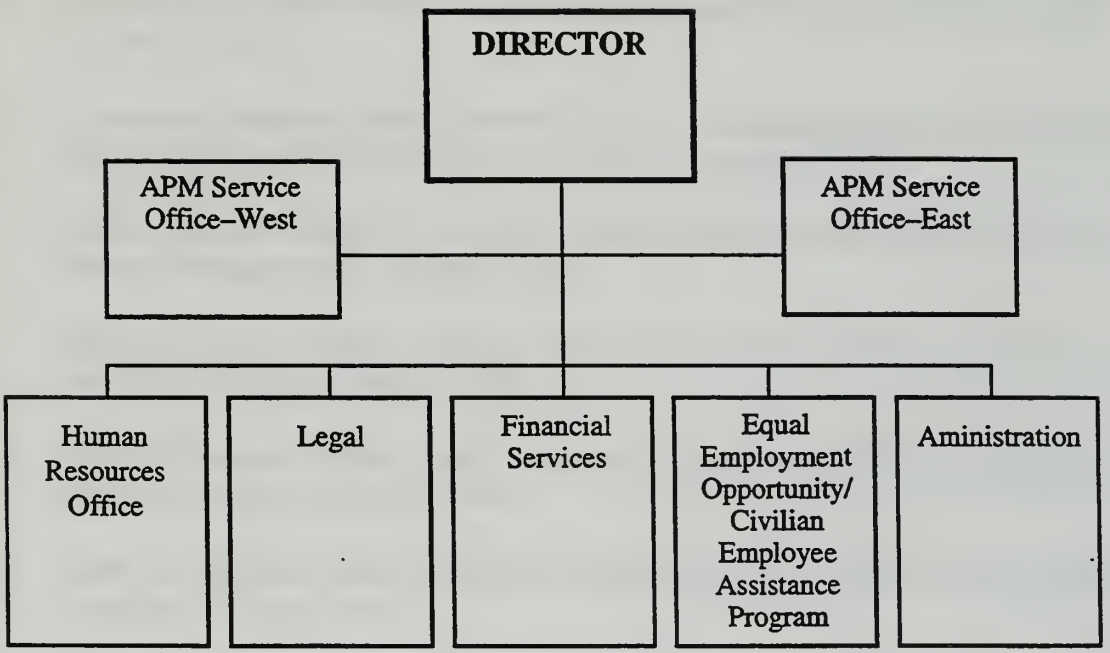
Since a primary objective of the re-engineering was to reduce overall costs and deliver a competitively-priced service to sponsors, MSC should conduct a comprehensive review of training requirements and the procedures used to allocate training opportunities. The command should examine whether a just-in-time training posture could be implemented to reduce training costs. Past performance should be the key determinant of promotion. If a person is scheduled to advance to a higher grade and needs specific training for their position, they should be sent just before they assume the new grade. Every attempt should be made to discourage the tendency of people to take many courses in the hope of getting promoted or to occupy time while waiting for a shipboard assignment.

### 6. Equalize Tour Lengths

MSCPAC abides by a policy of rotating mariners at or soon after the six-month point if others are waiting for a billet. MSCLANT should upgrade their system to more effectively monitor the location, status, and time in a given position of every mariner. A policy of involuntary relief will give everyone the opportunity to serve on a variety of ships and cut down on the length of time mariners have to wait for assignments.

APPENDIX

# Afloat Personnel Management Center*



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